

Making Real Progress Together



Contents

	Page
Introduction	1
Our Approach	2
Inspiring People: Some of this Year's Highlights	4
Our Year in Numbers	10
Our Roadmap for Success	12
Our Year in Review	14
Home Care: Year in Review	18
Get Involved	20
Our Team	22
Our Finances	24
Where We Work	25



An Annual Review is about what happened in an organisation in the last business year (April 2019 to March 2020).



This review is for the Real Life Options Group which includes Real Life Options, 1st Homecare and Montana Home Care.

Introduction

We are delighted to introduce the Real Life Options Group 2019-20 Annual Review. This provides a summary of business operations and financial performance while showcasing some of our inspirational stories, achievements and life choices from the people we support.

Everything we do at the Real Life Options Group is underpinned by our shared values of respect, honesty, responsibility and excellence. The Board and the Leadership Team believe that it is our values and our unwavering commitment to the people we support that is instrumental in driving excellent person-centred support and enablement. We are dedicated to creating an environment where the people we support are respected as equals, their rights as citizens are championed and they feel safe, secure and supported in their homes and their communities.

This year, we made a significant investment in people, technology and programmes aimed at achieving the very best in social support and care.

We embarked on a programme to define the organisation's social impact as a charity and as a good neighbour, making a positive difference to people's lives in our local communities. We launched the Community Connections Fund, a small grants initiative designed to empower the people we support and staff teams to initiate projects and activities that enhance opportunities for local people across the United Kingdom.

We know that great support begins with great people, so in addition to new employee benefits and reward and recognition schemes, we offer a

world class learning environment where staff can develop and achieve their full potential through our bespoke Skills Academy and ASCEND programmes.

It is without doubt our continued investment in digital tools and technology which has assisted our amazing staff teams to stay connected and continue delivering excellent support and care throughout the Covid-19 pandemic. With the introduction of person-centred digital support planning and improved procurement processes, we are confident about the future and that the people we support have every opportunity to make real and informed choices about the way they live their lives.

David Sargent

Chief Executive



David Wilkin

Chair



David Sargent is our Chief Executive and David Wilkin is our Chair. Together they are in charge of the Real Life Options Group.



They are both very happy about all the good things that happened in the last business year.

Our Approach

Our Approach

The Real Life Options Group is a well-established provider of social support and care, enabling thousands of people across the UK to have **a strong voice and a real choice** in the way they live their lives.

We know that changes in health and personal circumstances can impact the level of support people need as they continue through life. By providing the right level of personalised support at the right time, individuals retain greater independence and are enabled to achieve their potential.

We are known for providing responsive, individualised support for a wide range of people including those with learning disabilities, autism, physical disabilities, complex needs and behaviours that challenge, in addition to care at home for older people.

Our national organisation has **a turnover of £44.9m** and **employs 2,011 staff**. Working in close partnership with **48 different local authorities** in England and Scotland, we provide self-directed support to ensure that people have equal rights as citizens and the best possible opportunities to maximise their independence and social inclusion in their local communities.



Our Plan in Action

The Real Life Options Group began the financial year with a clear plan, to build on the previous year's period of transformational change and make real progress towards a culture of partnering and collaboration, agile working and outcomes focused systems and processes. As the financial year closes, we are pleased to report that an investment in digital technologies and a bespoke leadership and development programme paid dividends when faced with the COVID-19 pandemic.

In support of the organisation's forward strategy, we welcomed former Group Head of HR Andrea Holden into a new role as Director of Human Resources and former Head of IT, Business and Organisation Architecture, Paul Cusworth, as Director of Digital and Enablement.

At our annual conferences, Directors of Operations Vivien Simon and Jean Trench shared their operational roadmap for the year ahead. Their plan for success is well underway and is focused on providing excellent support through a highly skilled workforce and sustainable services. Further opportunities are being created that support individuals to have greater control over their lives and build positive connections within their local communities.

We are passionate about supporting people to reach their potential and a major catalyst in realising this ambition is our new support and enablement model, My Real Life Options. Our model is underpinned by putting the people we support at the very heart of our organisation's strategic planning, decision making and service delivery.



We make sure that we give the right support to help people live the life they choose.



We have two new Directors who are helping us run our charity better. They are called Andrea and Paul.

My Real Life Options

Enabling people to reach their potential



Every person is unique and communicates in a way that is meaningful to them. The people we support and their advocates must be heard. Their voices should guide their support, inspire and influence the wider organisation and their communities.



People should feel empowered to have choice and control in their lives. We spend time getting to know every person to understand what is important to them. Support is uniquely tailored to each individual to live the life they choose. Putting their choices first, we focus on a person's strengths and capabilities, working with them to achieve their real potential.



It is important that people feel happy and loved and enjoy positive friendships and relationships. We support and encourage active participation from their circle of support to enable individuals to have a sense of belonging and to feel valued.



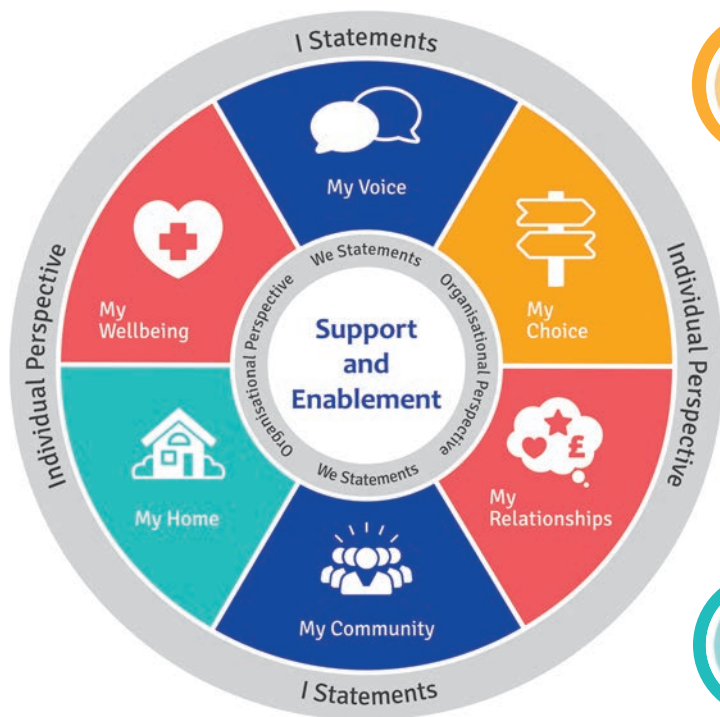
Everyone should feel valued and have a sense that they belong within their community. Individuals are supported to explore opportunities to integrate with others who have shared interests. People are encouraged to contribute to their communities, learn new skills and try new experiences that enables greater independence.



Home is where the heart is, a place where we belong. It is our safe space where we can express our personality. We enable people to live as independently as possible in their own homes, supporting their everyday choices about their home environment and the way they live their lives.



Good health and wellbeing is fundamental to getting the most out of life. As people transition through life we support them as their circumstances, needs and aspirations change. We encourage individuals to maintain a healthy lifestyle and make choices that positively contribute toward their general wellbeing.



We have a new model of support. It shows how we support people to reach their potential.



We listen to what people say. We plan their support around what they want to do.

Inspiring People

Some of this Year's Highlights...

Linda is Right on Target

Linda from Elgin, achieved fantastic success when she recently won her local Ladies Darts Championship. After playing incredibly well and securing first place in the competition, the size of Linda's giant winner's trophy could only be matched by her huge beaming smile. "I like the darts very much," said Linda. "I'm very happy when I win the trophies, it's great fun!"

Staff members and volunteers from Inspire supported Linda to get involved with the darts club after identifying that it might be a good opportunity. Right from the start, Linda really enjoyed it, particularly the social aspect of the club and making new friends.

Not only is Linda clearly a fantastic darts player, but being part of the club has also hugely increased her confidence and self-esteem and provided much better inclusion within the community.



She also volunteers with fundraising events for the club, including helping to run stalls at local fairs, participating in sponsored walks and organising raffles.



Paula's Bridal Dress Experience

Paula from Leeds had an amazing experience courtesy of Claire and the staff at The Bridal Emporium. Paula, who loves to dress up, called in to the shop with her support worker Helen to admire the beautiful wedding dresses on display.

When Claire, the owner, invited her to try on one of the dresses together with a sparkling tiara, Paula was over the moon. The shop staff and other bridal dress shoppers were so welcoming and friendly, treating Paula like a princess. To complete this wonderful treat, Paula received a bridal style makeover by a professional make-up artist.

A big thank you to everyone at The Bridal Emporium for making Paula's fairy-tale dream come true.



"Helen is always planning exciting activities for the people she supports and really puts their choices at the heart of everything she does."

Joanne Stringer, Service Manager



Linda enjoys playing darts. She came first in a competition and won a trophy.



Paula loves dressing up. She had a great time trying on a wedding dress and made some new friends.

Rebekah Meets Scotland's First Minister

Many congratulations to Rebekah from Falkirk who attended a prestigious 'Who Cares?' Scotland celebratory event. The occasion was held to recognise the magnificent achievements of care experienced people in 2019. It was a proud day for Rebekah who received a National Certificate in Animal Health Care, marking her achievement, dedication and success.

The event was engaging and fun, with a DJ, a light buffet and a special guest - Nicola Sturgeon, Scotland's First Minister. Rebekah invited her support worker Kelly to accompany her to the event.

Both ladies really enjoyed the celebrations and were very happy to meet and chat with Nicola. Rebekah looks forward to continuing her studies and to developing her skills and learning in animal health care.

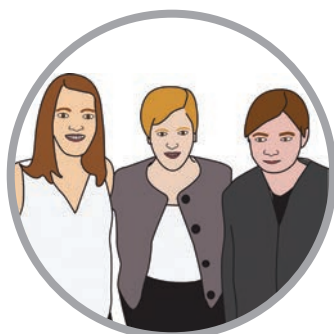


Les Loves his Gardening Job

Since 2017, Les from Redcar has been a volunteer gardener at one of our properties in Middlesbrough, transforming the grounds to the delight of residents, staff and visitors. Les has worked hard to create beautiful gardens and a wonderful vegetable plot with delicious produce for the people living in the house.

"My job is a really important part of my life and I love doing it. Staff are there for me if I need their help and make me feel welcome, wanted and respected," says Les.

"I enjoy cutting the grass, keeping the gardens nice and tidy and planting and growing the vegetable plot. So far, we've had tomatoes, cucumbers, onions, potatoes, runner beans and carrots. It makes me feel proud that I have achieved something new."



Rebekah went to a special event. She received a certificate and met Scotland's First Minister.



Les enjoys helping people in his community. He cuts the grass and looks after the plants.

Inspiring People

Some of this Year's Highlights...

Family Celebrations in Birmingham

Supporting people to stay connected with their family and friends is really important for good mental health and wellbeing.

David from Birmingham was delighted to enjoy a busy and fun-packed birthday weekend with two family members who were also celebrating their birthdays. He made the long journey to join his brother (aged 65) and his nephew (aged 35) for their joint celebrations and the very next day, they repaid the honour by being with him for his.

Carol, David's sister, and his support team went to great lengths to plan the parties and coordinate travel arrangements between the two locations. This was no mean feat as David's brother and nephew live in a different residential home some distance away and required support to attend the celebrations in Birmingham.



Fifty three year old David had a wonderful weekend and loved spending fun time with his family. He was delighted with his lovely cards and gifts, including a new karaoke machine with lights.



It's all GO in Glenrothes

The people supported by the Real Life Options Glenrothes Outreach team are delighted with their new style GO Forum, where the ethos is: led by the people, driven by the team, management enabled.

Staff are keen to ensure that the GO Forum evolves and continues to be centred on the people they support. With this in mind, Team Coordinator Stephen Gell and the staff team arrived at one GO Forum session with a clear purpose, to find out what people really want and how they prefer to be supported. A lively discussion followed, generating some significant feedback.

GO Forum members shared that they prefer being referred to as a 'person supported' rather than 'service user' and they prefer to say 'my team' rather than use the term 'support worker' or 'staff'. Attendees also agreed that they would like 'their team' to get better at communicating change.

The support team welcomed the group's candid feedback and left the meeting with plenty to think about. Attendees appreciated the opportunity to have their views heard; confident that their opinions will drive positive change.



David's sister and his support team helped him celebrate his birthday with his family.



People we support in Glenrothes talk about what is important to them at GO Forum meetings.

Derek is Making Great Strides

When Derek first moved into his new home in Glasgow five years ago, very few people, including Derek himself, thought he would ever walk again. As a result of an accident, Derek sustained a brain injury and consequently was unable to walk or bear any weight. After a considerable amount of time in a rehabilitation unit, the opinion was that nothing more could be done to improve his mobility.

On arrival at his new home, Derek could not walk and relied on a wheelchair for mobility, requiring full staff support for his everyday needs. Over the last four years, Real Life Options staff have worked tirelessly with Derek, supporting him with daily exercises and keeping his spirits up when he felt down. Slowly but surely, through determination and hard work, Derek's mobility improved.

Derek now has greater independence to get on with his life. He can walk with the aid of a rollator and requires minimal support for his everyday needs. His confidence has grown in leaps and bounds to the extent that he has joined new clubs and is trying out new activities. Needless to say, Derek has a great relationship with his support team who have worked so hard to help him achieve so much and says, "I love it here. The staff are brilliant."



Sowing Seeds and Making Planters

Not one to sit still for long, Nigel from York made excellent use of his time staying at home by designing, creating and building a beautiful wooden planter. Nigel normally volunteers at a church café during the week, but during lockdown, he observed the government's instructions to socially distance and instead, enthusiastically pursued his other big interest – gardening!

Earlier in the year, Nigel was busy potting seeds in his greenhouse ready to set out in the garden during the warmer months. Nigel was undecided as to whether he should grow vegetables or flowers in the planting box but we're sure that whatever his decision, they will look fantastic in his wooden containers.



With the support of his staff team, Derek has worked very hard to be able to walk again.



Nigel enjoys gardening and has made some beautiful wooden planting boxes.

Inspiring People

Some of this Year's Highlights...

Feeling Great After Losing Weight

Angela from Stockton-on-Tees is feeling fantastic after losing over two and a half stone in weight. After suffering with a painful knee for some time, Angela decided at her last person-centred review to see if losing weight would make a difference.

To help with her weight loss, Angela joined Slimming World and has been trying different food options with chicken curry with rice and pumpkin soup as firm favourites.

Angela set herself a target of twelve months to lose the weight. Not only did she achieve her target weight of two stone within ten months, she went on to lose another seven pounds.



"I feel fantastic and would encourage anyone to start Slimming World if they want to lose weight."

Angela from Stockton-on-Tees



Grow and Learn Roots Achievement

To say that Paul from Macduff has green fingers would be an understatement. Paul spent twelve months taking part in a garden project achieving a Grow and Learn Roots course certificate from the Royal Caledonian Horticultural Society.

As part of the course, Paul completed a workbook to record his activities, learning and skills. This included the key aspects of horticulture such as planting, garden maintenance, growing fruit and vegetables, greenhouse work as well as passing a certificated course on the use of mowers and strimmers.

During the project, Paul had responsibility for looking after eight hens and was involved in all aspects of their care: feeding, egg collection, keeping the hen houses clean and ensuring that the hens were physically well.

Paul, pictured with Carol Baxter (pre-lockdown), a presenter of The Beechgrove Garden TV programme, is delighted with his achievement and looks forward to starting the second level course when classes resume.



"Paul has worked really hard at getting his award and we are all understandably very proud of his achievements."

Forbes Sutherland, Team Coordinator



Angela feels much better and her knee does not hurt anymore after losing weight.



Paul worked very hard to get his certificate. He learnt how to use garden tools and look after plants and chickens.

Hope and Positivity Rainbows

A huge thank you to everyone for displaying beautiful artwork in their windows and their gardens in support and appreciation of those who work in the NHS, in the social care sector and in other key worker roles. Your posters and colourful rainbows have cheered up passers-by no end at a time when people have stayed at home to do their part in reducing the spread of the COVID-19 virus.



Lockdown Haircuts and a Lick of Paint

Adi and Mark in Glasgow made the most of staying in by giving their home a big makeover with help from their support staff. Armed with brushes and paint pots, they have been busy transforming their living space. The kitchen and bathroom have received new coats of paint and the friends have rearranged their lounge furniture for a fresh new look. Housemates Adi and Mark explain, "We really enjoyed deciding on the paint colour and where we wanted to put our furniture."

A small couch now sits in the dining area of the kitchen. The friends plan on buying a small coffee table and would like some new flooring to complete what is now a comfortable space to relax and one where they can chat with each other and their support team. Not only has their house been transformed, but Adi and Mark, are sporting new lockdown haircuts too, joining the many thousands of people around the UK.



People have been putting pictures of rainbows in their windows to say thank you to the NHS.



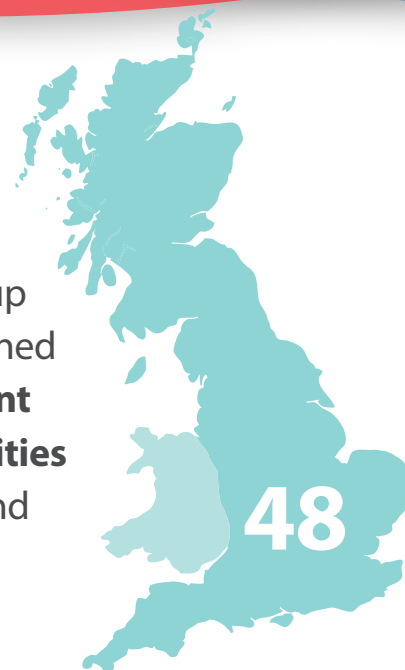
Adi and Mark have been painting walls and moving furniture to make their home look better.

Our Year in Numbers



The Real Life Options Group delivers **49,652 hours** of support each week.

The Real Life Options Group is commissioned to **48 different local authorities** in England and Scotland.



This year the Real Life Options Group provided support to **1,628 people**.



**ANNUAL
TURNOVER**
£44.9m
IN 2019-20

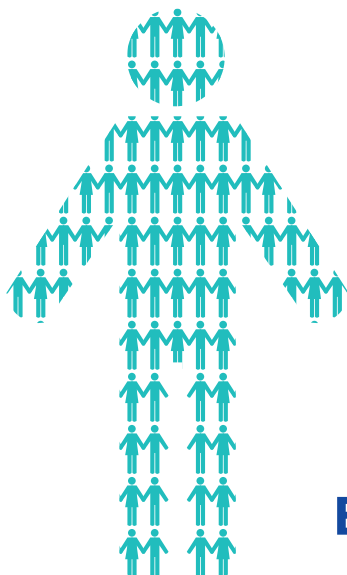
The Real Life Options Group continues to work closely with local authorities to **provide cost-effective services**.



This year we were paid 44.9 million pounds to support 1,628 people.



We gave 49,652 hours of support each week to lots of people in England and Scotland.



This year the Real Life Options Group has **2,011 employees.**

**2,011
EMPLOYEES**

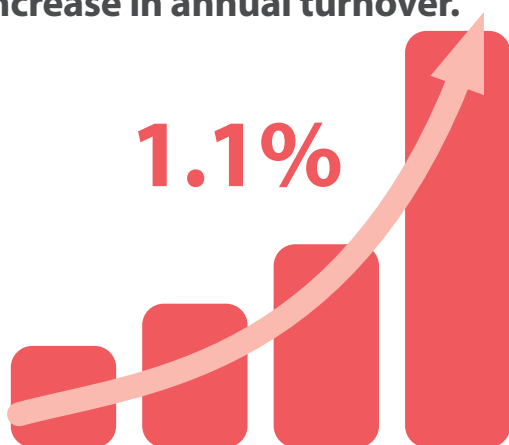


4,620

**LEADERSHIP AND
DEVELOPMENT
HOURS**

4,620 leadership and development hours were delivered to staff across the UK.

This year the Real Life Options Group secured a 1.1% **increase in annual turnover.**



Staff across the UK completed **10,614 e-learning courses.**



This year we were paid 1.1 percent more for the work we do than last year.



We have done lots of classroom learning and computer courses to teach staff new things and how to do a good job.

Making Real Progress Together

Our Roadmap for Success...



This is our roadmap. Each picture tells people what we will do to provide great support.



Our staff will learn what great support is and will learn how to work well together.



We will support people in their communities and enable people to achieve their potential.



We will work hard to make sure that our services are run well and make a difference to people's lives.

Our Year in Review

Making Real Progress Together

Over 140 employees from across the Real Life Options Group came together to be inspired at our national conferences themed around 'Making Real Progress Together'. Helmed by the Leadership Team, the roadshows in Leeds and Glasgow provided the ideal opportunity to empower and enthuse operational staff teams from across the UK and lay the foundations for real collaborative work across the organisation.

Following a powerful opening from the Directors of Operations, Vivien Simon (England) and Jean Trench (Scotland), which outlined our roadmap to success, attendees heard about our pioneering Community Connection Fund, the introduction of digital support plans and the latest developments with the organisation's volunteering strategy.

Interactive market stall sessions offered colleagues the chance to talk directly with representatives from business support functions to find out about key projects and how teams can work well together in the future. Our innovative new model of support was officially launched at the roadshows and twenty colleagues were recognised for their exceptional contributions during a Team Awesome Awards presentation.

Almost 98% of attendees fed back that they would like to attend a similar roadshow in the future.



"The roadshows were a fantastic way to really praise and reinvigorate our courageous staff teams so they feel empowered to help shape the direction of the organisation."

David Sargent, Chief Executive

Our Roadmap for Success

Our roadmap (see p12) for achieving best-in-class operational excellence encompasses a number of key themes that contribute to exceptional service delivery for transforming the lives of the people we support. These subjects range from staff-focused initiatives, such as investing in our people to more functional topics, such as improving our systems by introducing digital support plans.

The roadmap also highlights the importance of external validation from CQC and the Care Inspectorate and references the excellent person-centred support that is already being delivered in services throughout the UK. Essentially the roadmap provides a framework to ensure that all services maintain these exceptional standards.



Our managers went to important meetings to find out how we are supporting people better.



Some of our managers received certificates to thank them for doing a good job.

GoDigital

Throughout the year, we have introduced new technologies, systems and processes to streamline our business operations and service delivery. We are starting to see our investment reap benefits in terms of accurate management information, improved communications and efficient service delivery.

Digital Support Plans

This year, work began to develop an effective paper-light digital support plan system that is user-friendly and that captures real time person-centred information. **After a successful pilot across nine services**, the system is being rolled out with plans to have digital support planning embedded across Real Life Options by the end of the next financial year.

New Hardware and Broadband Upgrades

To ensure that our operational teams and remote workers have access to and are equipped to use our digital systems, we have invested in new hardware with over **100 laptops and 80 tablets** issued to staff this year. To minimise broadband disruptions and ensure continued access to critical

online systems, we have upgraded **around 60 sites** to fibre where permissible and with backup 4G dongles.

Connecting Teams

With such a large geographical spread, the adoption of fit-for-purpose, cost-effective tools and technologies is important to support business continuity. With the onset of Covid-19, Microsoft Teams really came into its own as it enabled staff to continue working effectively from home whilst maintaining connections with operational teams. In the region of **150 employees now use Teams** on a regular basis.

Real Talk App

Launched last year, Real Talk, our internal app-based communications channel has proved to be an effective tool for sharing updates with frontline staff, celebrating achievements and best practice. **Over 1,240 people** across our organisation are now subscribed to use this secure platform.



Some staff have been using a new support plan system. They say it helps them do their job better.



We have an app called Real Talk. Our staff use it to keep up to date with important news for their job.

Our Year in Review

Skills Academy Launch

Skills Academy, our new learning experience portal, was officially launched in early 2020. As part of our transformation to a learning culture, where we are not just training staff but actively involving them in learning, this dynamic online platform hosts a wide range of interactive courses, toolkits and self-directed learning opportunities.

This more flexible approach to learning allows staff to access modules at convenient times and complete at their own pace, taking into account people's different learning styles. It is also significantly more cost-effective as it reduces the need for travelling to attend face-to-face courses and is more operationally efficient as it allows for new starters to quickly complete mandatory training as soon as they join the organisation.

The wide range of topics covered by available courses include safeguarding, moving and handling, First Aid, mental capacity, medication and a GDPR refresher course. The plan is for subject experts from all functions to continue to contribute to the Skills Academy Innovation Group to develop new courses every year.



Reaching New Heights with ASCEND

Leaders from across the organisation have benefited greatly from ASCEND, our leadership and talent management programme. ASCEND, an acronym for Acquiring Skills, Competencies, Evolving, Nurturing and Development, is aimed to build people's confidence and provide the tools to effectively lead people and increase employee engagement in all teams.

Over the course of the past year, managers have been involved in a number of engaging, interactive sessions based around different areas of personal development, including leadership styles, coaching skills and emotional intelligence. ASCEND has enabled leaders from all areas of the Group to come together and share their expertise, paving the way for effective collaboration on future projects.

The ASCEND programme is CPD accredited and the first round of participants are due to graduate in late 2020.



We have a new place where staff can learn using the internet. It means staff can learn at home or at work.

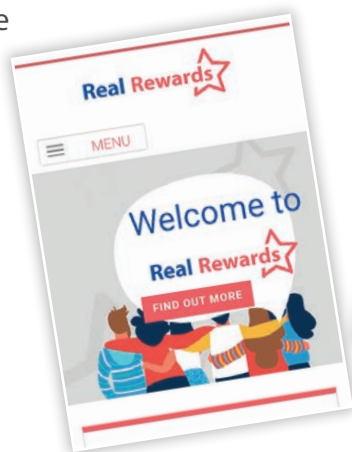


Our managers are learning how to get better at leading their teams so that they do a good job.

Exciting New Employee Benefits

A wide range of appealing employee benefit schemes have recently been introduced to the Real Life Options Group to help engage staff and contribute to their health and wellbeing. This includes Real Rewards, which provides a fantastic collection of benefits, including great discounts and special offers across high street retailers, grocery shopping, holiday savings and family days out. Real Rewards also provides access to a free 24/7 GP helpline, online exercise classes and a number of practical tools to aid staff's physical and mental health.

Another key addition is the introduction of Salary Finance, a financial wellbeing provider that offers a number of products to help people feel more in control of their finances and make their money go further. This includes useful savings accounts with deposits made directly from your salary, affordable loans, Salary Advance and a range of budgeting tools, videos and webinars. We have also launched a new Cycle to Work scheme and MyEva; a revolutionary app that is very simple to use as a free digital financial advisor.



Real Heroes Awards

In 2020, we officially relaunched the Real Heroes Awards which recognise and reward outstanding individuals across the organisation. The awards aim to encourage staff recognition, as well as celebrating the achievements of the people we support.

Historically, the Real Heroes Awards were always an annual event, whereas this new revamped approach rewards people at regular intervals throughout the year. This increased frequency means achievements are formally recognised in a more timely manner, contributing to better staff engagement and motivation.

The Heads of Operations from across the UK are also now much more involved in encouraging nominations from their areas, actively engaging all staff to recognise those who go above and beyond what is expected of them.



We have an app called Real Rewards. Staff can use it to save money or get some things free.



When staff do good things, people can vote for them to get a Real Heroes Award. They get a certificate and a gift.

Our Year in Review: Home Care

We are delighted to announce that **Desiree MacLennan**, former **Regional Operations Manager of 1st Homecare**, was appointed as **Head of Operations** to drive the strategic and growth agendas across the home care businesses.



People Focused and Quality Led

In a desire to establish best-in-class care at home services, we continue to move away from traditional zero hour contracts, instead offering guaranteed contracts of employment. Our commitment to improving levels of job security has been warmly welcomed by our staff.

1st Homecare Service Managers participated in the ASCEND Leadership and Management programme. The CIPD accredited course has provided them with the management tools and the confidence to lead their teams in a way that develops their skills, supports continuous improvement and encourages people to embrace positive change.

Friends Reunited

Many congratulations to Julie Stuart, Service Manager at 1st Homecare Dumfries and her team for raising a tremendous £271 at September's Macmillan Big Coffee Morning for cancer research and support.



In addition to the funds raised, it was a fantastic opportunity for those using the service to socialise with one another. Everyone enjoyed the bingo and the prize raffle, sharing stories, smiles and lots of laughter.

The team are delighted that the event brought together two childhood friends who lost contact over 70 years ago and who have been making up for lost time since.

1st Homecare Consolidates

1st Homecare's ambition for the financial year was to focus on consolidation, showcasing what it does well, and making continuous improvements to ensure the future growth agenda is safe and sustainable. In partnership with Real Life Options Group senior colleagues, and through strong management and leadership, we implemented change that will ensure the people we support receive first class quality care and support from all our services.

We can report that the Dumfries Service led by Julie Stuart and her team achieved 'Very Good' in their last Care Inspectorate visit.

With efficient working and business sustainability in mind, the decision was made to cease service provision in Aberdeen to concentrate on other growth areas. Consequently, our newest services in Fife and East Ayrshire are now yielding positive growth results.



1st Homecare supports older people to remain independent in their own homes and in their communities.



1st Homecare Managers have been on a course. They have learnt how to be great at managing their teams and their service.

Introducing Montana Home Care

We are pleased to report that Falkirk based Montana Home Care joined the Real Life Options Group this year, which fits well with our ambition to expand care at home provision in Scotland.

Montana Home Care is an award-winning care at home provider with over 60 permanent staff offering a comprehensive range of personal care services to facilitate independent living for 160 people.

The Montana Home Care team, led by Service Manager Gemma Williams, is well-established and highly regarded within its locality and has consistently achieved very good and more recently, excellent Care Inspectorate ratings in care and support.



Afternoon Tea in Bo'ness

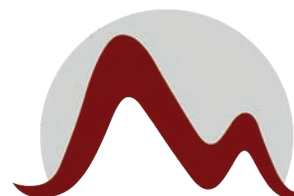
The Montana team know that many of the people they support enjoy the opportunity to socialise with others in their community when they can and regularly hold events to bring people together.

January's Afternoon Tea event in Bo'ness was a great success and very well-attended. The popularity of the get together was due in no small part to the lovely food on offer and the array of songs from star entertainer Lauren.

Attendees were treated to a safety briefing from their local community police who provided some invaluable advice on how to avoid doorstep crime and how to keep their homes safe; leaving behind a supply of purse/wallet bells for people to take home.

Service Manager Gemma Williams shared a short presentation about the Care About Physical Activities (CAPA) programme aimed at supporting older people to keep active and mobile.

The afternoon concluded with a repertoire of songs and ballads from across the years, with everyone, including staff joining in or getting up to dance.



Montana Home Care



This year a new company called Montana Home Care joined the Real Life Options Group.



People supported by Montana Home Care enjoyed an afternoon tea party with music and singing.

Get Involved

Real Life Volunteers

To enhance opportunities for the people we support, we piloted a programme in Scotland with funding from The National Lottery to recruit community volunteers under the Real Life Volunteers banner with Nick McLaughlin, Volunteer and Social Values Manager, appointed to drive the initiative forward. He began by connecting with a number of organisations including Volunteer Glasgow, Falkirk Council and the Job Centre to promote the programme with positive results. The support from partner organisations and the interest from potential volunteers was really encouraging.

Volunteers work alongside paid support staff to build their experience, capabilities and skills in an

interesting and highly rewarding sector. Their roles complement rather than replicate the work by paid staff, however volunteers do have access to the same training opportunities and our Real Rewards benefits portal.



The campaign was promoted initially in Scotland through colleges and universities to reach a wide audience base with a broad range of skill sets with great success. We have now rolled out the initiative across the whole of Scotland and have made a further appointment in England to drive volunteering opportunities across the whole of the Real Life Options Group.

Volunteering in Falkirk

People that work in the support and care sector come from all walks of life. Some choose it as a career option when leaving school whilst others opt to become a support worker later in life.

For those who are unsure if it is for them, volunteering is a great way to find out what it is like to work in the social care sector. Marie, a student from Falkirk was keen to gain experience and spent four months as a Real Life Volunteer.

Working alongside support staff in a care home setting, Marie enjoyed getting to know the people who live there; helping with some of the daily tasks and getting involved in one to one activities. Marie thoroughly enjoyed her volunteering experience and looks forward to volunteering again when her studies are completed.



Nick works for Real Life Options. He has been talking to people about volunteering.



Volunteers give their time for free. They do a good job as they help people get more out of life.

Community Connections Fund

At the last annual conference, the Real Life Options Group introduced an exciting new initiative aimed at assisting operational teams and the people they support to build great connections within their communities.

The aptly named Community Connections Fund is a £65,000 pot of money set aside to support sustainable projects initiated and led by staff and the people they support.

Allocations from the fund are managed by a panel, comprising of support staff, coordinators, managers and business support personnel, who review applications, monitor spend and support successful project delivery.

"Before I started my placement, I was very nervous about walking into an unfamiliar environment. Staff helped me feel at ease and were all so friendly. My experience has definitely been a positive one and has really boosted my confidence. It showed me that there are good carers out there that can deliver good practice. I can't wait to return soon to volunteer."

Marie, Volunteer

So far, there have been 15 applications made, all at varying stages with one application from Oxford successfully processed and a grant awarded.

The people who live at Hope House in Oxford have used the grant from the Fund to purchase a garden shed, equipment and tools. Their aim is to turn their garden into a beautiful communal space where people can safely socialise and that provides a haven for insects and birds.



"The launch of the community Connections Fund sits perfectly with our aim to invest in our local communities. We look forward to seeing ideas such as proposals for a sensory garden and a social café come to fruition in the future, generating positive outcomes for the people we support."

David Sargent, Chief Executive



We have some money to support people to do good things. It is called the Community Connections Fund



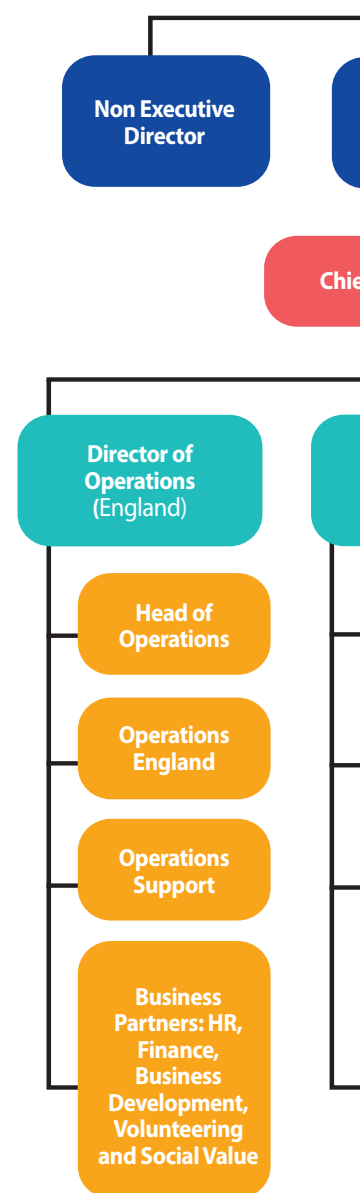
Some people in Oxford have been given money from the fund to work on a community garden project.

Our Team

Our Team

Enabling people to reach their potential lies at the heart of everything the Real Life Options Group stands for. That's why this year we have invested in a number of roles that are focused on ensuring we always strive to provide best-in-class support. Our new **Head of Specialist Support and Development** has worked in our Operations team for over two decades and is committed to continually strengthening our service delivery. Equally, our two newly appointed **Volunteering and Social Value Managers** will be coordinating volunteering opportunities in England and Scotland to incorporate even more value added activities for the people we support.

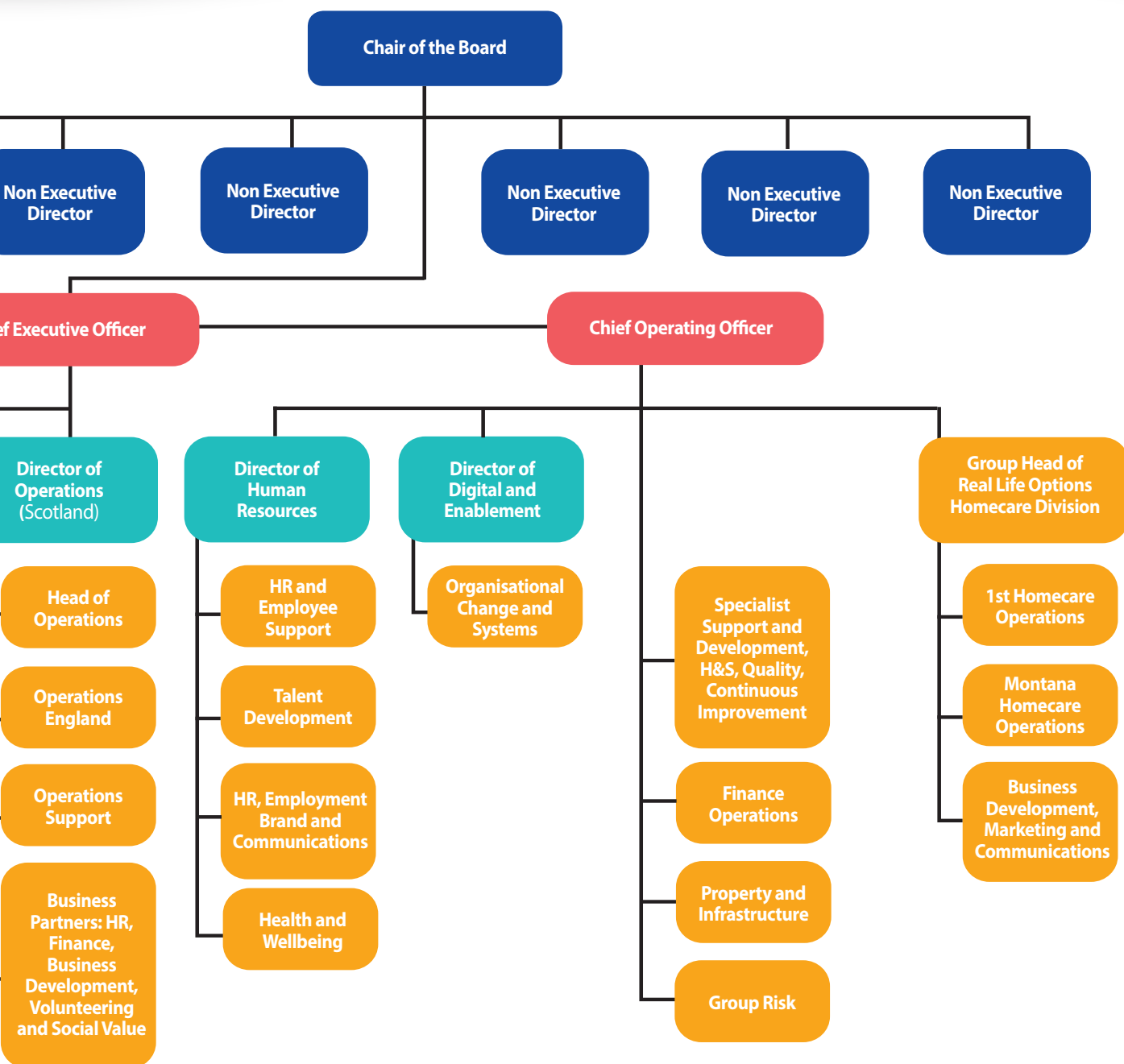
Our Senior Leadership Team also saw two existing staff members with a wealth of experience promoted into new roles; **Director of Human Resources and Director of Digital and Enablement**. This change has helped create a more diverse leadership team with clearer accountabilities, which has equipped the business to be in the best possible position to achieve our strategic goals.



The people who work at the Real Life Options Group are very important in making it a good company.



The chart on this page shows all the different teams and says who is in charge of each team.



We have changed how our teams work so they can help support people in the best way.



One change is that we have two new people to work with volunteers so that we can support people to do more things.

Our Finances

Our Finances

We are pleased to announce that this year, the Real Life Options Group turnover increased by 1.1% from £44.5m to £44.9m reflecting a growth in services across Real Life Options and its subsidiaries. Real Life Options achieved an increase in turnover of 3% from £38.4 million to £39.6million and its subsidiaries achieved growth of 1.7% from £5.7million to £5.8million. Our net incoming resources before other recognised gains, losses, transfers and tax increased by 53% from £476,000 to £727,000.

There has been an increase in activity throughout England and Scotland, with new services generating additional income. A focus on cost reduction across the group has resulted in notable positive financial impact such as a 22% reduction in the cost of agency staff. Operating costs reduced by £318,000 and interest costs were £23,500 lower as short-term borrowing reduced and debt was repaid in line with scheduled amortisation agreements.

Our business mix continued to evolve in line with strategic plans, with a shift of 14% in our market segmentation towards supported living and housing support and a reduction in our residential care provision of 16.5%. New supported living packages in Glasgow, Aberdeenshire, Warwickshire and Oxford have contributed to the improvement in financial performance during the year.

There has been an increase in Care at Home provision through the East Lothian Care at Home and Housing Support Framework, the subsequent transfer from the British Red Cross and the provision of Support at Home in Falkirk. We continue to discuss the need for fee rates that ensure quality provision and sustainable services for the people we support. Over-capacity and voids continue to be an ongoing challenge and we continue to work with commissioners in both England and Scotland to ensure that we continue to provide effective and economic services.

England achieved growth of 6.2% in contrast to a 16% decline in the previous two years. We are carefully reviewing our services in London and Birmingham with a view to ensuring we have an optimal presence in these key cities. Ongoing challenges such as variability in new referrals, available accommodation and the difficulty of recruiting and retaining staff are all factors that we continually assess across all group services.

	2019-20	2018-19
Turnover	£44,993,000	£44,491,000
Expenditure	£44,266,000	£44,015,000
Net Incoming Resources	£727,000	£476,000
Reserves	£7,344,000	£6,716,000



This year, we were paid 44.9 million pounds to help support people in England and Scotland.



This year, we have got better at managing our staff costs and reduced the interest on the money we borrow.

Where We Work

Where We Work

The Real Life Options Group operates throughout England and Scotland with the map representative of the geographic spread from London to Elgin.

Business Support Centre:

Real Life Options,
David Wandless House
A1 Business Park
Knottingley Road, Knottingley
West Yorkshire WF11 0BU

Tel: 01977 781800

www.reallifeoptions.org

Business Support Centre – Scotland:

Real Life Options,
Suite 1, Ground Floor
Academy House
1346 Shettleston Road
Glasgow G32 9AT

Tel: 0141 471 8146

1st Homecare Ltd

Unit 14B, Dickson Street
Elgin Industrial Estate
Dunfermline
Fife KY12 7SN

Tel: 01383 842947

www.1sthomecare.co.uk

Montana Home Care Ltd

83 Grahams Road
Falkirk
Fife KY12 7SN

Tel: 01324 878572

www.montanahomecare.co.uk



Real Life Options has lots of services in England and Scotland where we help support people to live their lives the way they want to.



To find out more you can phone us on **01977 781800** or visit our website: **www.reallifeoptions.org**

Real Life Options

a real choice | a real voice | a real difference



Business Support Centre:

Real Life Options,
David Wandless House, A1 Business Park,
Knottingley Road, Knottingley,
West Yorkshire WF11 0BU



Tel: 01977 781800



Email: info@reallifeoptions.org



Website: www.reallifeoptions.org



Facebook: [/RealLifeOptions](https://www.facebook.com/RealLifeOptions)



Twitter: [@RealLifeOptions](https://twitter.com/RealLifeOptions)



Real Life Options is registered as a charity in England (No.1156259)
and in Scotland (No SC045939). RLO019